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NOV.

by Paul Al Cordel

150

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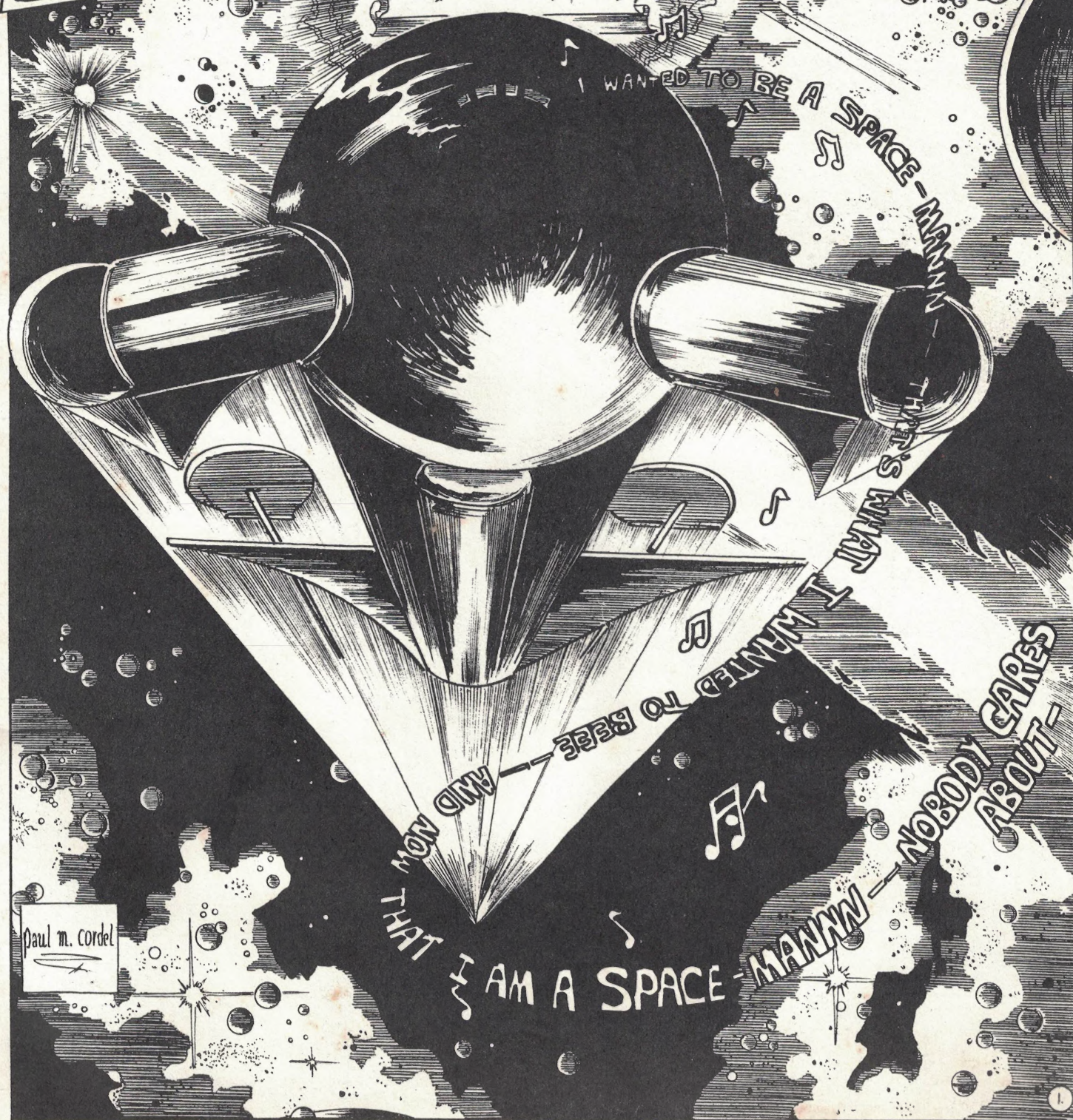
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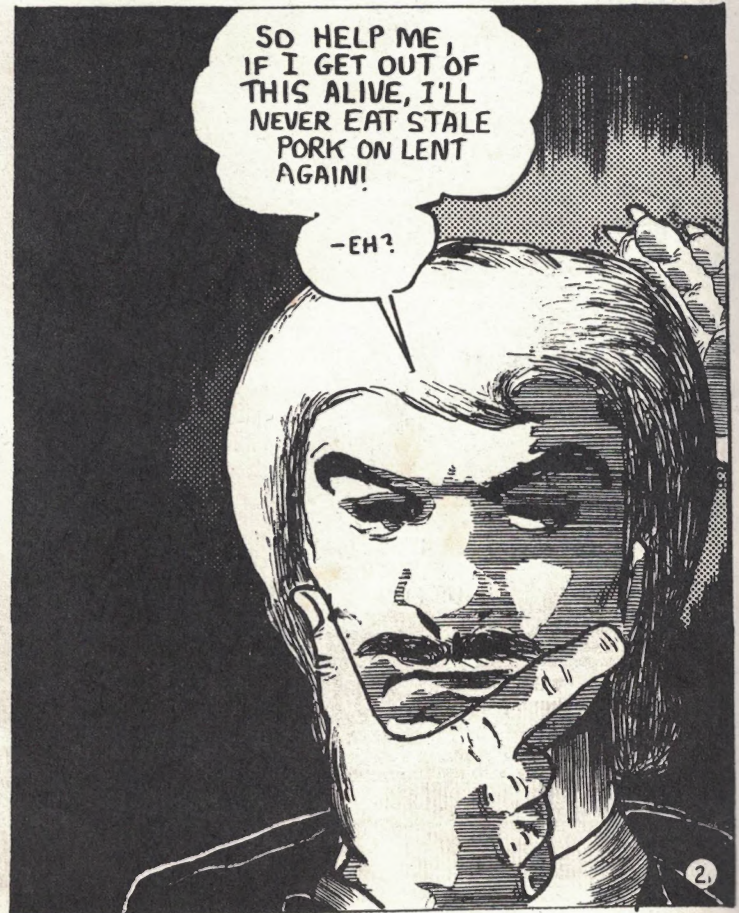
Cougar Comics Inc. takes pride in presenting the auspicious return of the 15¢ comic magazine.

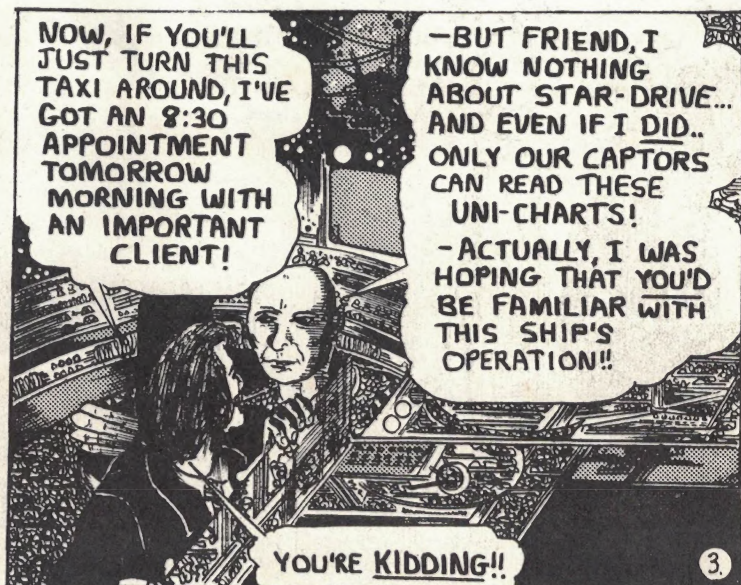
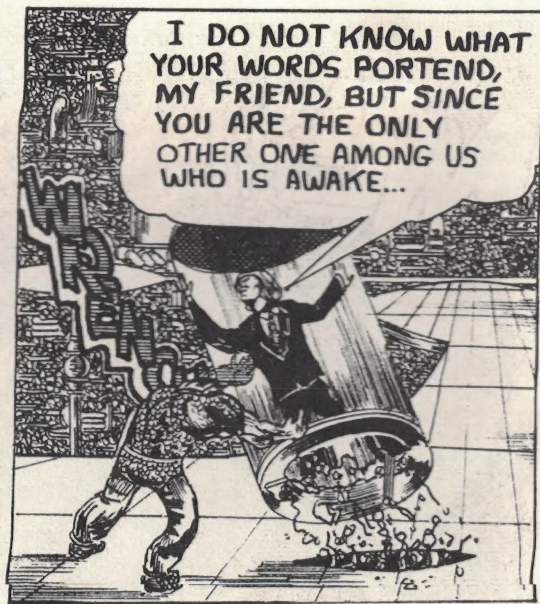
EXCALIBUR: A Space Odyssey. Written and Drawn by Paul M. Cordel. © 1973 by Cougar Comix Inc., a division of Progressive Publications. Vol. 1, No. 1, Special Debut Edition, November, 1973. Published every three months. Any reproduction of the contents of this publication is prohibited. Recommended background music for greatest reading pleasure: "Moving Waves" by Focus: Sire SAS 7401 Charles Pitts, Jr. advisor; Gerald Brown, editor. Fanotary quote © 1972 New York Times.

EXCALIBUR

a space odyssey







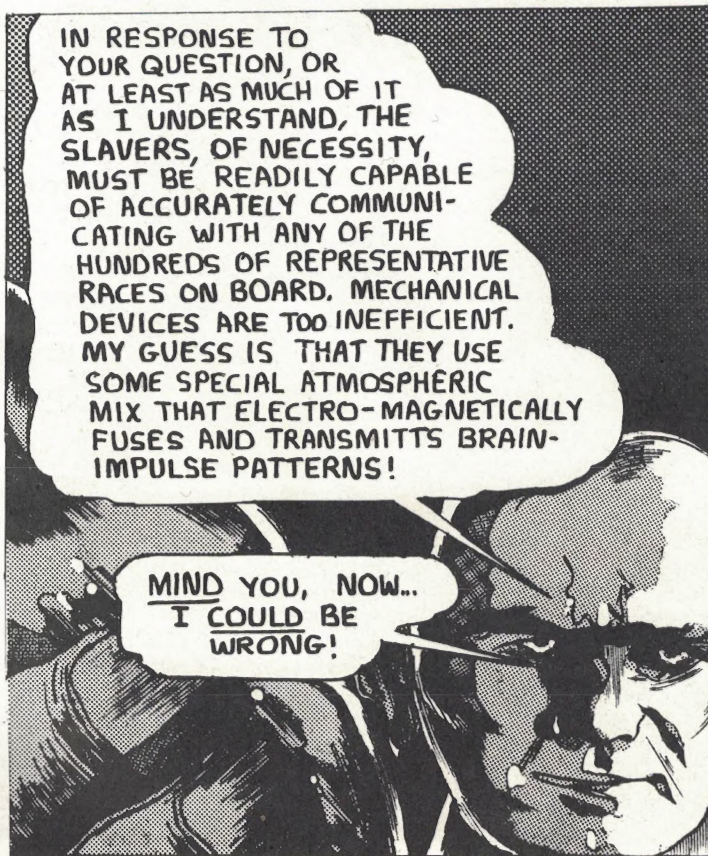
WELL... SO LONG AS WE ARE ABOUT THE TASK OF INTRODUCING OURSELVES, LET ME TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT THE WORLD I ORIGINATE FROM, AND YOU, IF YOU ARE SO MOVED, MAY RECIPROCATÉ;

...THOUGH, ADMITTEDLY, MY LONG PERIOD OF CAPTIVITY IN SPACE HAS GIVEN ME AMPLE TIME TO PONDER MY OWN WORLD'S SPECIAL TRAGEDY, IT EVER PERPLEXES ME HOW AS FAR ADVANCED A RACE AS WE CORBEINS COULD HAVE RESPONDED TO SO CRUEL A DESTINY WITH SUCH COMPLACENCY.

...YOU SEE, A DISTANT RACE, COUNTLESS BILLIONS OF LIGHT YEARS AWAY, BECAME KNOWN TO US THROUGH THAT DESTINY, AND WOULD HAVE EVER REMAINED DETACHED AND UNKNOWN TO US... SAVE FOR THE IRRELEVANT BABBLING WE PICKED UP* FROM THEM... AND THE HORRIBLE GENETIC IMBALANCE THEY UNWITTINGLY CREATED BY WAY OF A MYSTERIOUS RADIATION THAT WAS UNLEASHED BY THEIR WAR-WEAPONS... CONDUCTED THROUGH THE VACUUM OF SPACE... AND CONTRACTED BY MY RACE, LIKE A PANDEMIC BACTERIA!

...PHYSIOLOGICALLY, WE CORBEINS WERE ONCE VERY CLOSE TO YOUR MAKEUP, MORT PARKER... PERHAPS THIS IS WHY I FEEL SOMETHING CLOSE TO KINSHIP WITH YOU NOW... BUT THE GENETIC IMBALANCE CAUSED OUR EVOLUTION TO SPEED UP FRANTICALLY... SOME OF OUR NEWBORN WERE THROWN BACKS... OTHERS FUTURISTIC MUTATES... ONLY THROUGH CAREFULLY-TOOLED, CAREFULLY PLANNED ADVANCES IN THE EUGENIC SCIENCES WERE WE ABLE TO SALVAGE WHAT WAS LEFT OF OUR RACE. WE BECAME SKILLED IN THE SELECTIVE BREEDING OF VARIOUS GROUPS OF WORKERS AND THINKERS... TO THE EXTENT THAT WHAT WERE ONCE VOCATIONS BECAME RACES! WE GAINED IMMORTALITY... AT THE EXPENSE OF LOSING THE JOY OF PROCREATION FOREVER! THE ULTIMATE CURSE!

*THROUGH RECEIVING DEVICES, POSSIBLY EQUIVALENT TO EARTH'S RADIO-TELESCOPES.



A bit later..



TREAD STEALTHILY BUT CAREFULLY, MY FRIEND... DANGER STALKS THE CORRIDORS OF THE UNKNOWN!

YEESH, WHAT DIALOGUE !!



WHA-- WHAT?!!?



HEY!! THIS THING'S GOT ME BY THE LEGS!! HELP!!

I... AM... PAINFUL...LY ... A... AWARE... OF OUR... PRE... DICAMENT!! UNNN!!



SOME... KIND... OF.. BIOLOGIC ... DEFENSE... MECHANISM... BUILT... TRANSPLANTED... INTO SHIP'S... HULL!! ... DRAWING US... TO A CENTRAL DIGESTIVE CORE!!

HELPPPP!!



ENOUGH!!

I'LL REDIRECT THIS ELECTRICAL POWER... FREE MYSELF!! MY COSTUME'LL PROTECT ME!



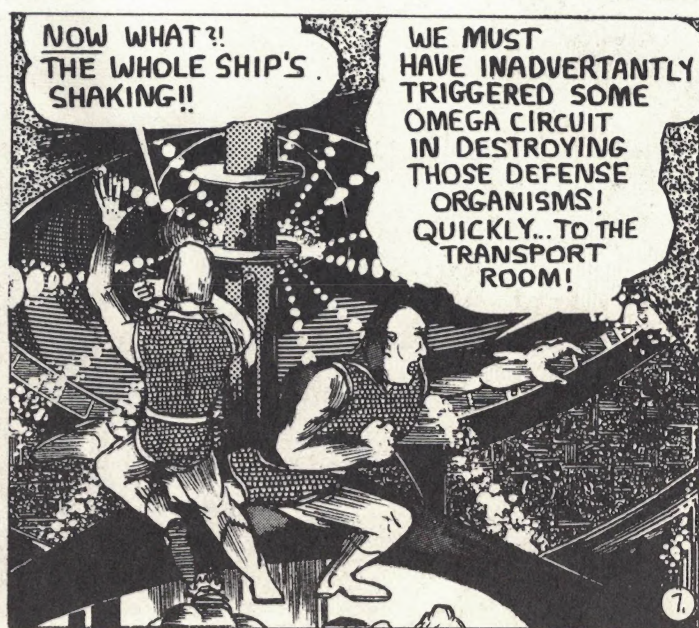
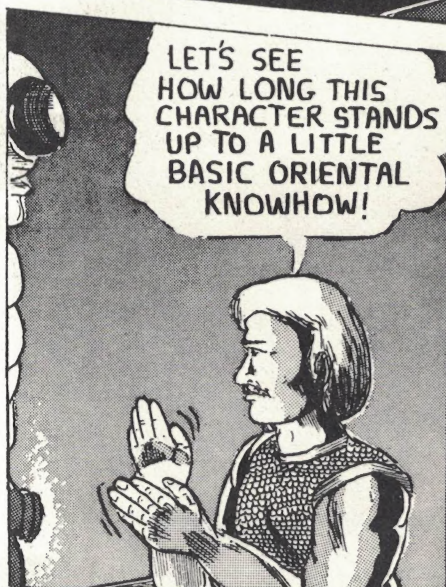
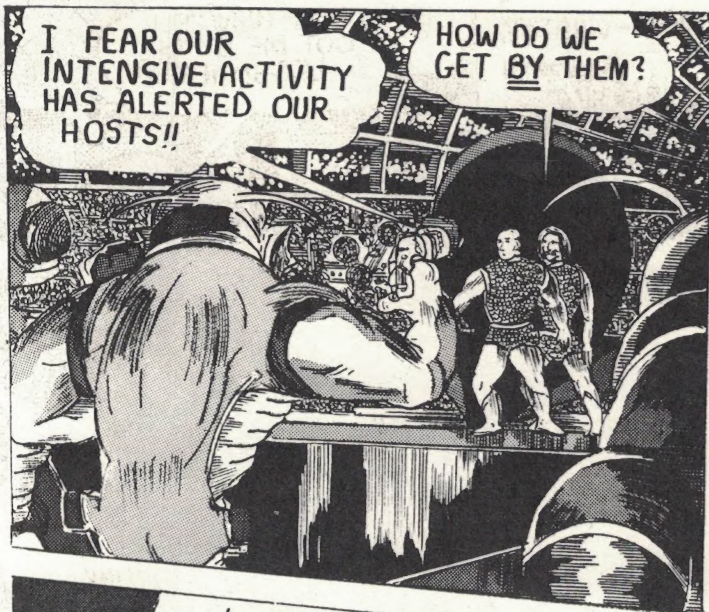
NOW TO MARSHALL MY STRENGTH REMAINING AND FREE MY FRIEND!!

WHEW... GLAD YOU'RE ON MY SIDE!

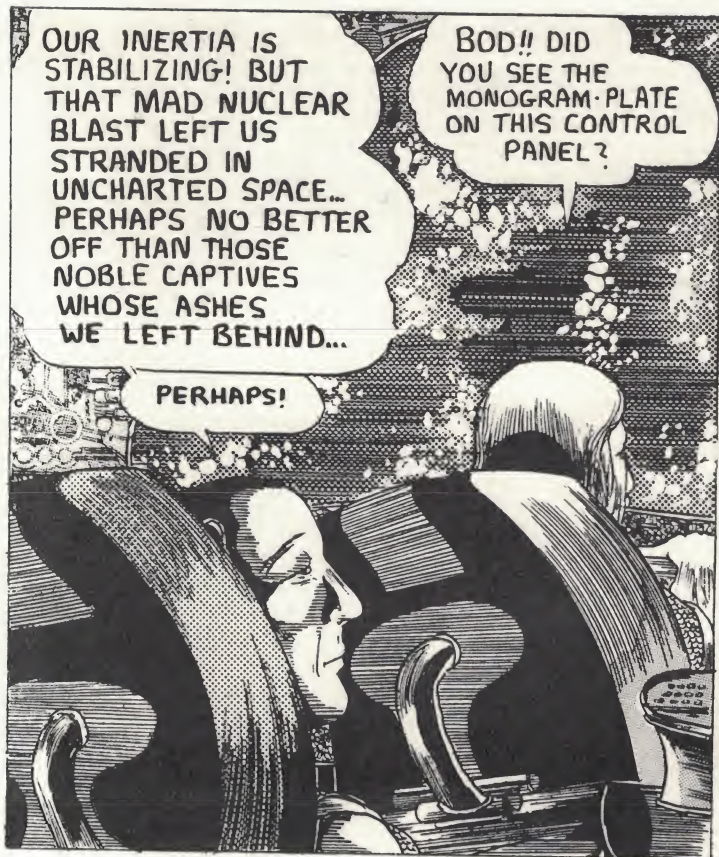


NOW WHAT?

IT APPEARS THAT THE DANGER IS NOT YET OVER!







OUR INERTIA IS STABILIZING! BUT THAT MAD NUCLEAR BLAST LEFT US STRANDED IN UNCHARTED SPACE... PERHAPS NO BETTER OFF THAN THOSE NOBLE CAPTIVES WHOSE ASHES WE LEFT BEHIND...

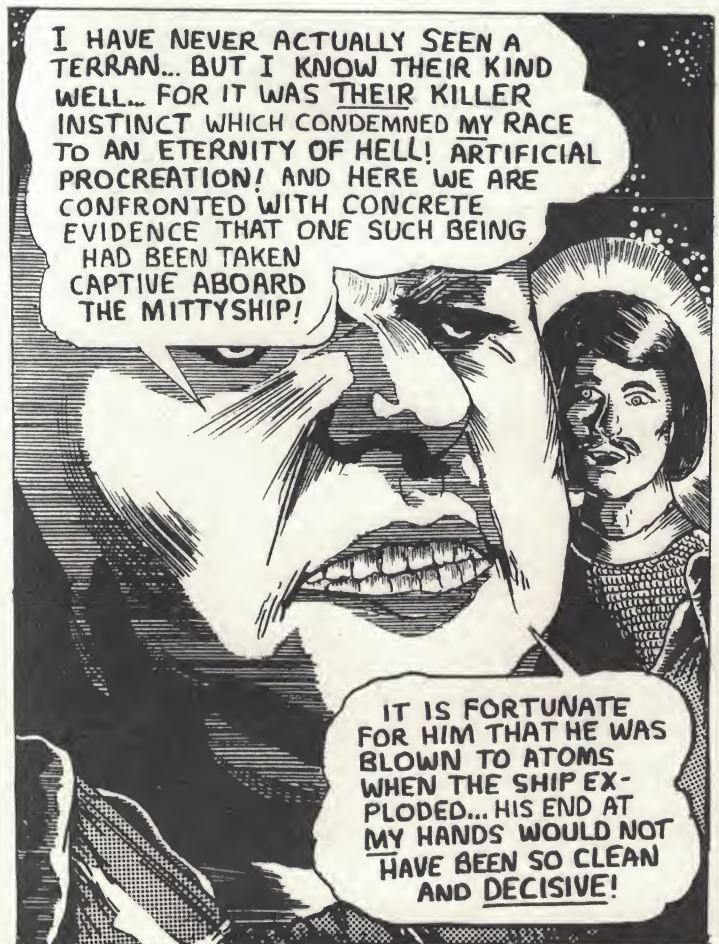
PERHAPS!

BOD!! DID YOU SEE THE MONOGRAM-PLATE ON THIS CONTROL PANEL?



IT SAYS: "EXCALIBUR"... LETTERED IN OLD ENGLISH SCRIPT, YET!!

YES...THE MITTEANS HAD A PECULIAR CUSTOM OF NAMING THEIR SHUTTLE-CRAFT AFTER SLAVE LEGENDS.. IN AUTHENTIC SLAVE SCRIPT! IRONICALLY, IN THIS CASE, A TERRAN LEGEND!



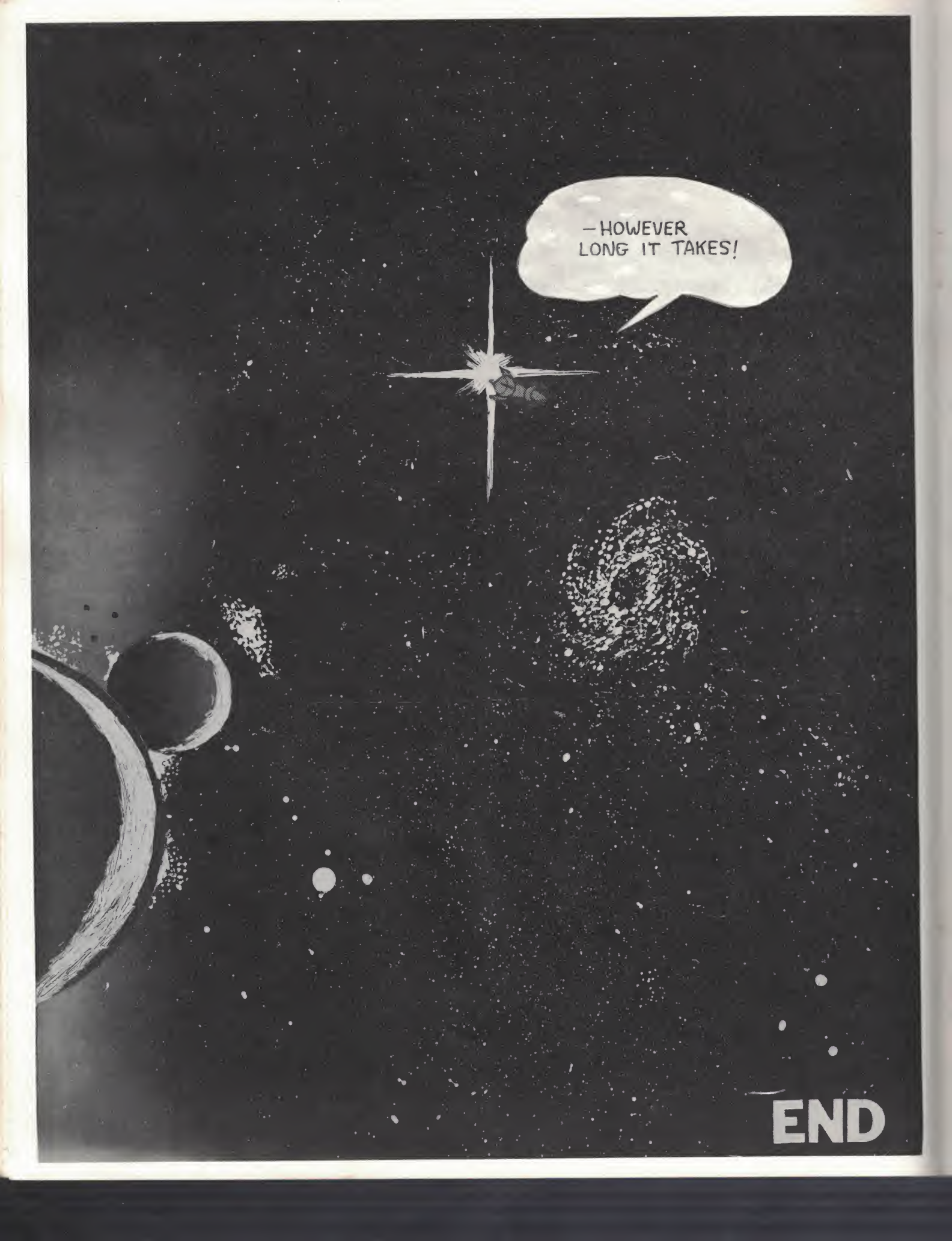
I HAVE NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN A TERRAN... BUT I KNOW THEIR KIND WELL... FOR IT WAS THEIR KILLER INSTINCT WHICH CONDEMNED MY RACE TO AN ETERNITY OF HELL! ARTIFICIAL PROCREATION! AND HERE WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT ONE SUCH BEING HAD BEEN TAKEN CAPTIVE ABOARD THE MITTYSHIP!

IT IS FORTUNATE FOR HIM THAT HE WAS BLOWN TO ATOMS WHEN THE SHIP EXPLODED... HIS END AT MY HANDS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SO CLEAN AND DECISIVE!



NEXT TO MY MOST CHERISHED DESIRE... TO FIND A WELL-MARKED PATHWAY HOME... MY SECONDARY AMBITION IS TO FIND THE HOME-WORLD OF THE BARBARIC TERRANS AND REPAY THEM IN KIND FOR THE ATROCITY THEY'VE COMMITTED... KNOWINGLY OR UNKNOWINGLY... ...TEAR THAT WORLD ASUNDER!

STAY WITH ME, MORT PARKER, AND BE MY PARTNER IN JUSTICE... COSMIC VENGEANCE WILL BE EXACTED...



—HOWEVER
LONG IT TAKES!

END

STARGAZERS

You'll forgive the agate-sized type, we hope, but it was regrettably necessary to do things this way in order to jam everything we had to say into the right space. I don't know who it was who initiated the policy of having a page of required editorial text in magazines such as this one, but we don't necessarily subscribe to it..even though admittedly there are certain facts we wanted somehow to bring to your attention in this particular edition. One of those facts deals with the temporary nature of this rather ambitious project: this is a pilot book, to gauge reader response to a new and somewhat revolutionary kind of comic. Actually, we prefer to think of Excaliber as a kind of illustrated novel; a logical extension to a much abused and overstated art form, perhaps more closely related to television than to literature. We took a page from Richard Corben's textbook and coupled it with some of the more interesting literary trends explored by Marvel-Pimely, and came up with an interesting, popularized comics style, which we hope will be favorably received by comics fans and non-fans as well. Like the famous J.A.R. of the underground circuit, who SIUE students know well, we do not deal in explicatives, and prefer to remain remotely detached from the stories themselves. There is no way to take comics seriously, unless you are either a collector or an art major. All men, though, have a need to fantize, to explore uncharted and dangerous regions through vicarious means. Knowing this, then, our goal is more to explore hitherto untapped veins of a rich, literary resource...that bastardized form of writing known as science fiction...and to emerge with new slants on old themes, a new relevance.

Your host, admittedly, is a writer in an artist's costume, but enjoys working in art almost as he does pounding a typewriter. Working up this strip as a sideline in an already overcrowded timetable, it has so far taken him over two months to get half the book done. A firm commitment will not be made until all the votes from prospective readers are in, but your host assures you that a book of this nature could conceivably be put together a lot faster, were full attention given to it on a full-time basis; say, bi-monthly. But, he assures us, there will have to be a very definite response from a very real audience before this book can become a reality. In other words, if you read it and you like it enough to want to see more of the same...for God's sake write when you can, and let us know what you think of Excaliber. We even gave this page a nice, simple, conventional title so you won't be embarrassed addressing the envelope for your note.

In all probability, your mailman will think you're writing to Jean Dixon.

If the response is good, we'll turn all of our future editorial pages over to reader forum, as a constructive means of exchanging ideas and con-

cepts. Stands to reason that, since this is going to be a book slanted towards a mass audience, that audience should have a voice in the kinds of art and stories that go into it. With us, you have an added advantage, since we're working on a limited budget with limited resources. Since we're quite anxious to have your business, we're just as anxious to find ways of pleasing you. Uh, of course, since we're not underground, we'll have to kind of cool the sex a bit..sorry, guys. But aside from that, anything goes, as far as we're concerned.

Incidentally, while we're about doing acknowledgements, I'd like to personally thank good ole Charlie Pitts from Granite for acting as advisor to this first edition, and to wish him luck in his underground endeavor. Of course, with help from J.A.R. himself, there isn't much luck involved. We'd like to extend an open invitation to Mr. Pitts to lend us his adroit pen whenever the mood strikes him, because his art is great..truly food to the eye. We'd also like to thank his buddy Mr. Butch B. for devoting his time and attention to the script for the opening installment of Excaliber, even though his fantastic illustrations were withdrawn at the last moment. We wish Butch luck in whatever he's trying to get away with down in Florida, and with his own strip, Phiddeas Phoom, which your host wrote the script for. Uh, sorry, but the explicatives snuck in by accident. It's just that when you have an opportunity to consort with talent of the caliber of these gentlemen (or is it Ex-caliber?) you become somewhat sensitive to their enthusiasm. The brainstorming sessions at Larry's in Belleville had a lot to do with the eventual initiation of this project, guys. I hope you enjoy it too.

All of this back-patting and in-blabbing is boring, boring, boring..to write as well as to read, so we'll dispense with it. One final note, though, before we go on..in this area particularly, there are a group of incredibly talented art affectionados which I would personally like to invite into the fold, to get the greatest variety of art styles possible. Among those who are proficient in the medium are talented Thomas Hohn, who would fill this prescription quite nicely, a nomadic romanticist named Duane Robinson, who was last seen meditating on a waterbed at the Apocalypse, and hostile Ed Savage, who feels, like an awful lot of us do, that prices for collector's editions have gotten out of hand. Your host last collaborated with Tom Hohn on the Antiman, which we're seriously considering doing a revival of.

As for our current intentions regarding a certain space odyssey, they've already been mentioned, but can be boiled down briefly into two well marked words: to entertain. We hope we have stumbled onto a formula that you'll enjoy, and want to see more of. Your interest, not to mention your money, is greatly appreciated.

The address, if you have any thoughts you'd like to share with us, is: 9 West Koesterer St., Freeburg, Illinois, 62243, curiously enough.

More of this later.



PORTRAITS IN OBSCURITY # 5





Now, here's a little game everyone can play. It's called pin the tail on the unknown author. As you will observe, the above sketch contains not only Paul himself, but just about every literary creation and comics character he's ever developed. You may have a bit of difficulty picking out your own favorites, since very little of Cordel's work has ever been published. In fact, the book you are now holding is the first collection of art and fiction ever formally published. From time to time, you'll probably be seeing some of these characters popping in and out of the series, since name-dropping is one of Cordel's favorite pastimes. The schematic diagram at the right tells all:

1. The ole massah hisself, formerly a student at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Ill. where he majored in Journalism and minored in (of all things) sociology. Now currently working for the St. Louis Globe Democrat under another name.
2. Cordel's focal creation, Mark Benton, main protagonist in the "Resurrection Trilogy", all about messianistic and millinestic movements and a man who died before his predestined time.
3. Benton's romantic interest (in a sense) Nancy Morris.
4. The Antichrist.
5. Martin Taylor, government agent and brash adventurer, one of Benton's acquaintances; a central figure in the activities of his followers following his death.
6. Nancy's brother David, who disavowed his material life and became a prophet.
7. Pollonious, an anti-war activist ahead of his time.
8. Earnest Havingdale of "Phoenix" 10. A co-creation of Cordel and Tom Hohn.
9. Petulia Dennings of "Phoenix" 10.
10. The Antiman.
11. Phoenix, nameless, faceless assassin for the

(continued on back inside cover.)



Your humble Host went rummaging all through his files last week, seeking choice quotations to supplement this general information page from nationally renowned media expert Edmund Carpenter, but to no avail; apparently someone cleaned up the joint since last meeting. So instead, here is a short quote from an article by Dan Carlsinsky of the New York Times:

"Comic book collecting has been growing slowly but steadily since the series of nostalgia waves began in the middle 1960s. Today, serious - not to say obsessive - collectors who analyze stories, criticize their art work, and even examine the binding staples, have created a full-fledged market, with all the trimmings: conventions where buyers and sellers meet, numerous trade journals (called "fanzines") and hundreds of dealers.

"The bulk of the comic book market is made via mail order, but in most big cities you can buy over-the-counter from a shopkeeper. One such man is Edward Summer, a bearded, pony-tailed 26-year-old filmmaker. Summer is owner of the Supersnipe Comic Art Emporium of New York City.

"...Summer said, "There is a tremendous revival in comic books and the industry is producing a lot of what I believe will be important comic books. So it's good to stockpile."

To which we might add, after having poured over the current Overstreet a dozen or two dozen times, the two recent mags that have

accrued the most monetary value in the shortest amount of time are the two new Kirby books from National, Demon (#1, Aug., 1972, Mint condition priced at \$1.00) and Kamandi (#1, Oct., 1972, Mint condition priced at .40) though frankly, we expected the latter to have accrued more, and good ole Swamp Thing by Wrightson, (#1, Nov. 1972 Mint condition priced at \$1.00.) also a National book.

On a more personal note, the original art from this auspicious issue of Excaliber will be exhibited in St. Louis at the mini-con to be held at the Gateway Hotel July 13th. Too bad the mag itself isn't coming out until August. Oh, well... we think we enjoyed it.

By the way, since we're not quite non-profit... (even though we're getting closer to it all the time) we're going to offer original art to our readers for sale on a very limited basis. This offer will begin with the second issue, though. Art from the debut edition is not for sale. If we come under too heavy critical fire, we may be forced to suspend the offer, but we'll try once and see.

In the future, this page will be devoted solely to serious criticism of the comix medium, using both quotes and commentary from national sources and fanzines alike. Obviously, we believe in the medium... otherwise, we wouldn't have gone to the trouble of putting the book together to start with. We'll be discussing both underground and over-the-counter comic mags... and maybe, if luck is really with us, we'll find that blasted quote from Carpenter. Who knows?

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arts.**

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a space odyssey

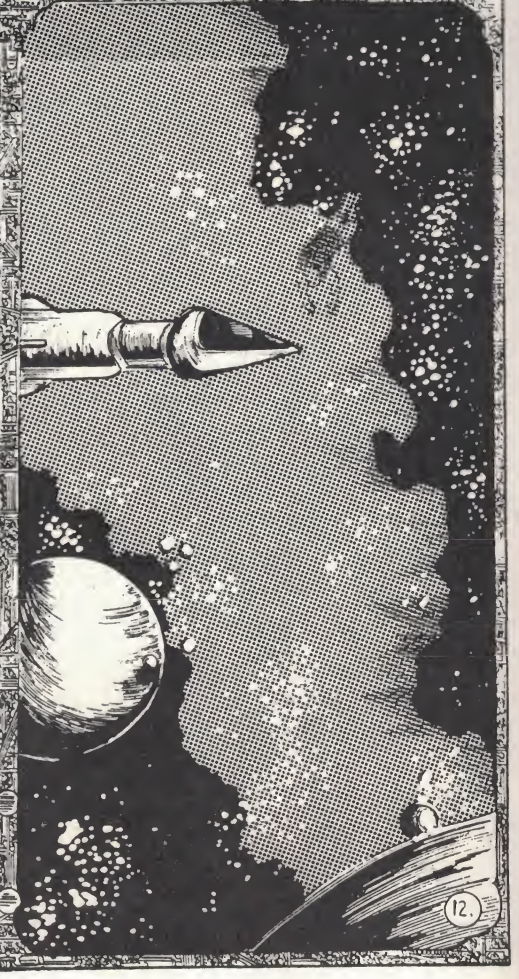
...the power of death
and will be
...of it as to
...my
...of action
in sleep. He
will never
know the
secret which
would have
placed me at
his mercy!"¹⁰

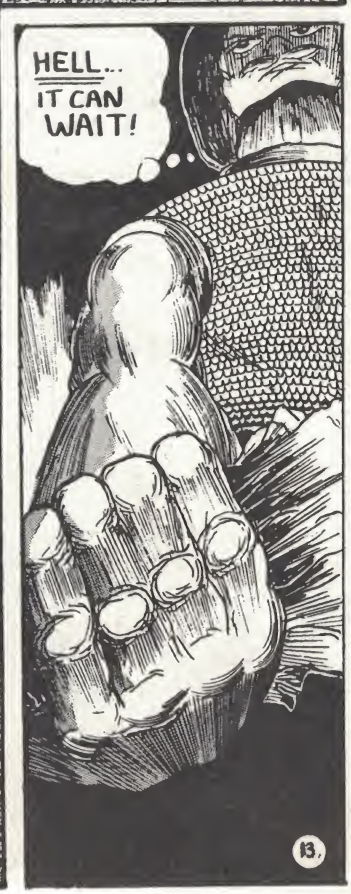
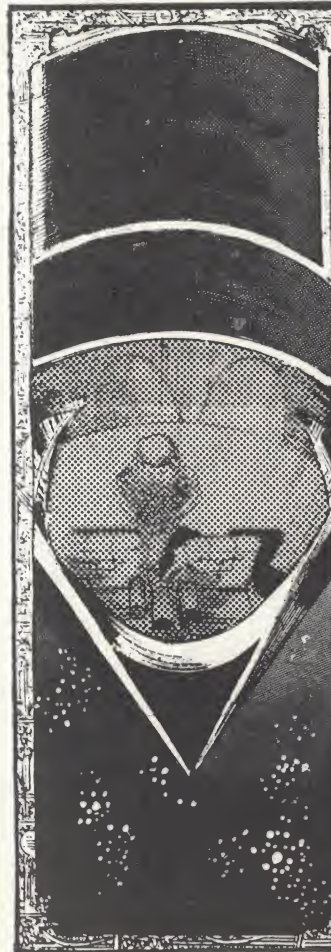
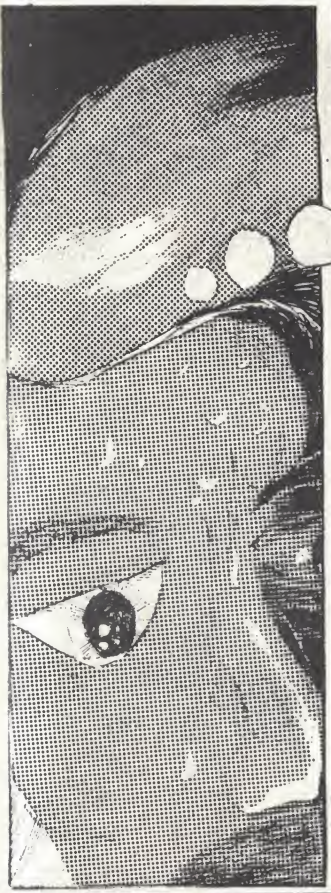
A high-contrast, black and white portrait of a man with a mustache and dark hair, looking directly at the viewer. The image is framed by a thick black border. The man has dark, wavy hair and a prominent mustache. His eyes are dark and focused. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows. The background is dark and textured. The overall style is reminiscent of a woodcut or a high-contrast photograph.



THE SCREAMING STAR

paul m. cordel







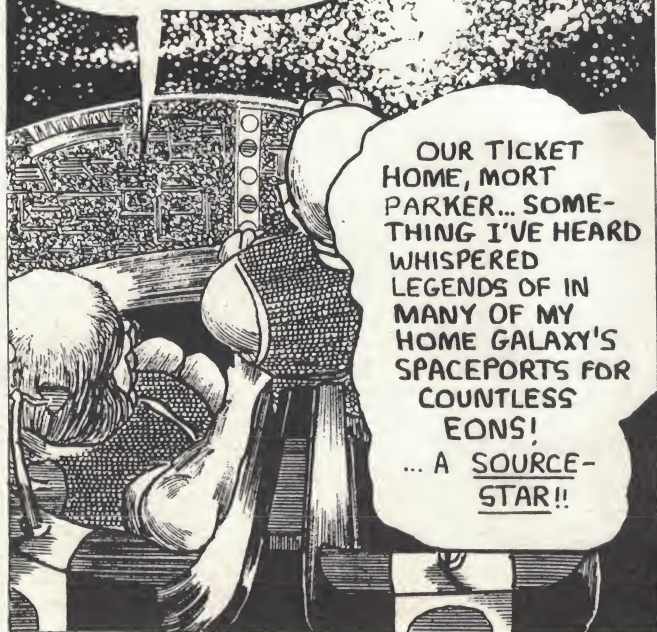
HE'S STARTING TO WAKE UP! I'LL HAVE TO EAT THIS BLASTED ENTRY I WROTE TO KEEP HIM FROM READING IT! IF HE CAN RECOGNIZE A PHONETIC STRUCTURE FOR OLD ENGLISH *"TERRAN" HE'LL SEE IT IN MY HANDWRITING AS WELL!

YAWN!!!

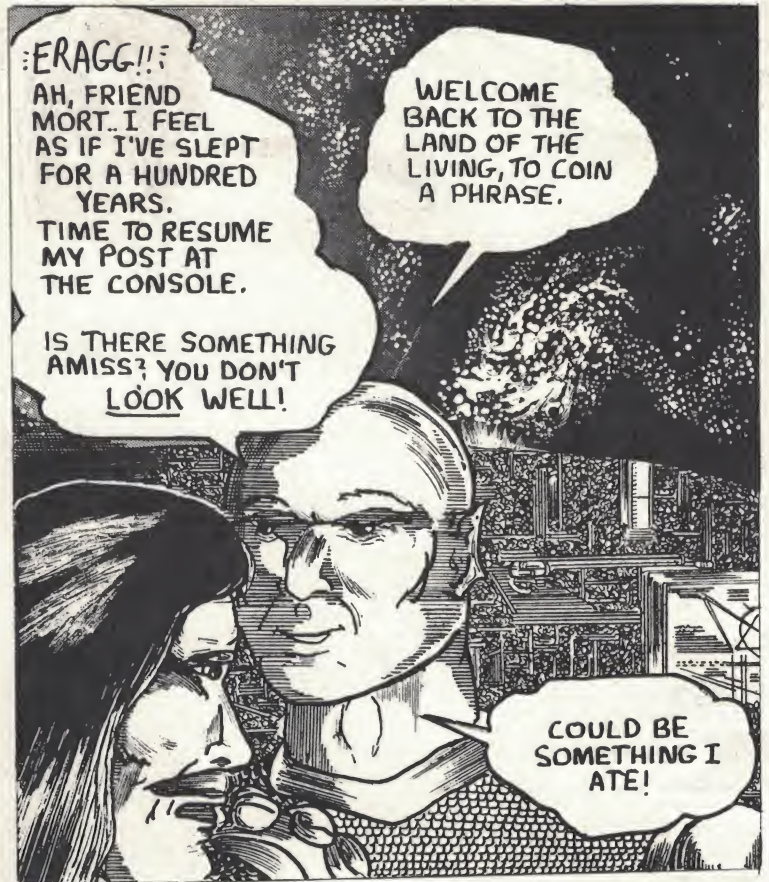
URPPP: THIS STUFF'S AWFUL!! HOPE IT ISN'T POISONOUS!

*IF YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE TWO UNFORTUNATE PEOPLE IN THE CIVILIZED WESTERN WORLD WHO LIKE TO START READING A BOOK IN THE MIDDLE, PROGRESSING IN BOTH DIRECTIONS AT ONCE, WE REFER YOU TO PAGES 4 AND 9 FOR FURTHER EXPLANATION.
-Helpful Host.

JUST WHAT IS IT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, PREY TELL?



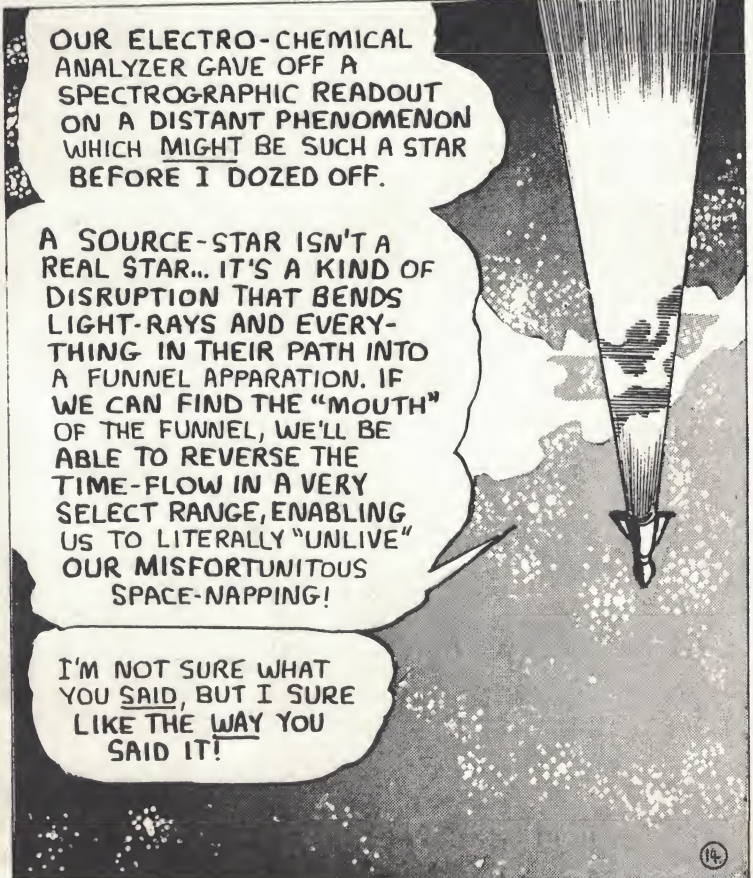
OUR TICKET HOME, MORT PARKER... SOMETHING I'VE HEARD WHISPERED LEGENDS OF IN MANY OF MY HOME GALAXY'S SPACEPORTS FOR COUNTLESS EONS! ... A SOURCE-STAR!!



ERAGG!!
AH, FRIEND MORT.. I FEEL AS IF I'VE SLEPT FOR A HUNDRED YEARS.
TIME TO RESUME MY POST AT THE CONSOLE.
IS THERE SOMETHING AMISS? YOU DON'T LOOK WELL!

WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, TO COIN A PHRASE.

COULD BE SOMETHING I ATE!



OUR ELECTRO-CHEMICAL ANALYZER GAVE OFF A SPECTROGRAPHIC READOUT ON A DISTANT PHENOMENON WHICH MIGHT BE SUCH A STAR BEFORE I DOZED OFF.

A SOURCE-STAR ISN'T A REAL STAR... IT'S A KIND OF DISRUPTION THAT BENDS LIGHT-RAYS AND EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH INTO A FUNNEL APPARATION. IF WE CAN FIND THE "MOUTH" OF THE FUNNEL, WE'LL BE ABLE TO REVERSE THE TIME-FLOW IN A VERY SELECT RANGE, ENABLING US TO LITERALLY "UNLIVE" OUR MISFORTUNITOUS SPACE-NAPPING!

I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU SAID, BUT I SURE LIKE THE WAY YOU SAID IT!



IS IT THE-

I THINK NOT-

- BUT IF WE
DEVIATE FROM OUR
PRESENT COURSE
OR OUR PRESENT
RATE OF TRAVEL
ONE IOTA, OUR
CALCULATIONS
WILL BE ALTERED...
AND WE'LL LOSE
THAT PRICELESS
OPPORTUNITY
FOREVER...

Shortly after...

THERE'S
SOMETHING
UP AHEAD!

FOR, WE WERE
LUCKY TO HAVE
FOCUSED ONTO
THIS SOURCE-
STAR WITH THE
LIMITED FACILITIES
WE HAVE ON BOARD
THIS CRAFT...
AND OUR SPEED IS
LIMITED, SINCE
WE ARE NOT EQUIPPED
WITH STAR-DRIVE.

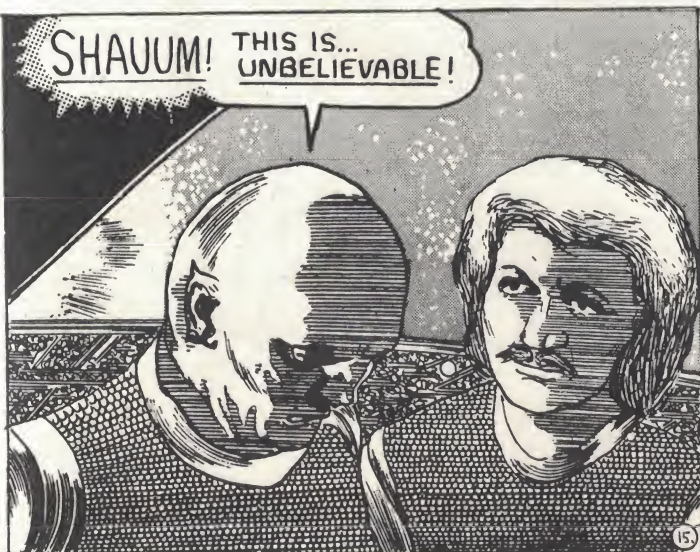
I SEE IT!

WE'RE UPON IT MUCH
TOO SOON IF IT IS.

HMF!
LOOKS LIKE
A GALECTIC
BOWLING-BALL!

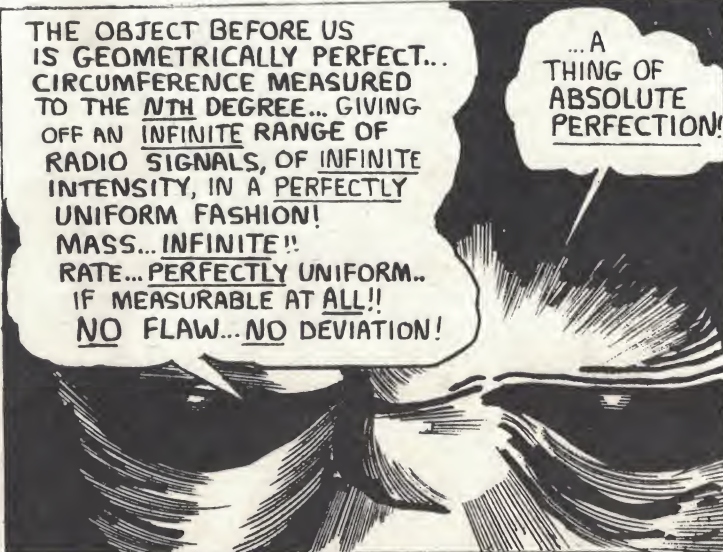
COULD BE A STRAY
SATELLITE... I'M CHECKING
CALIBRATIONS NOW.

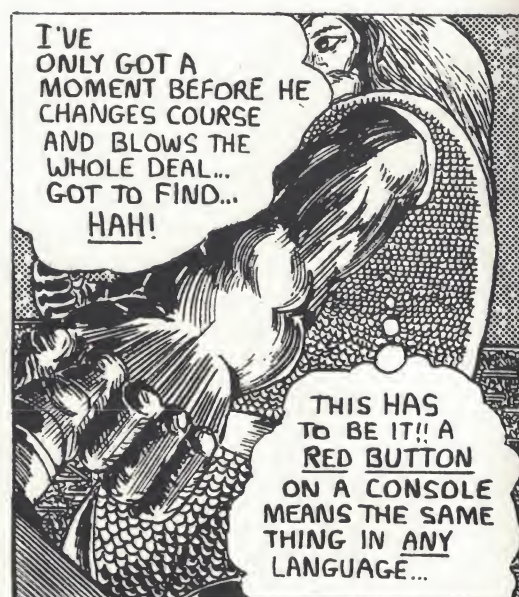
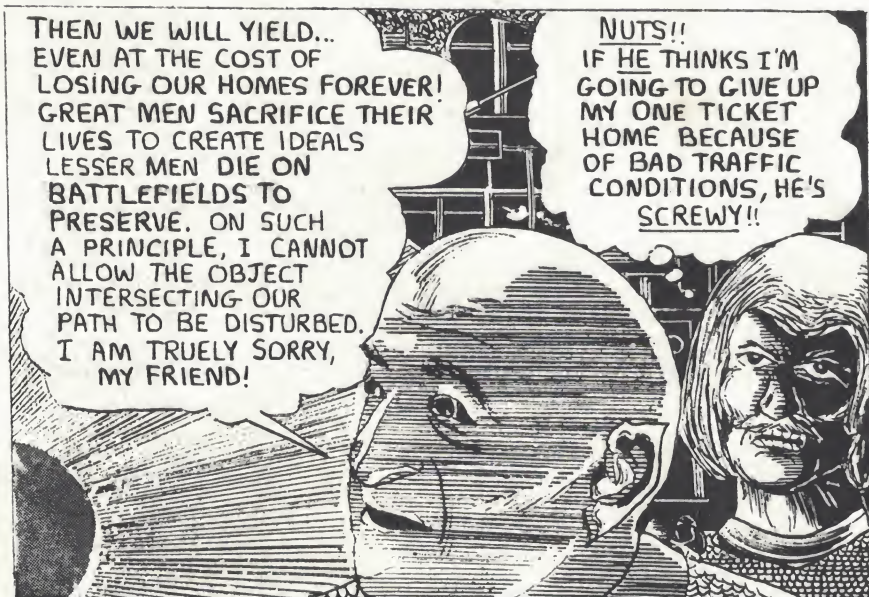
SHAUUM! THIS IS...
UNBELIEVABLE!



THE OBJECT BEFORE US
IS GEOMETRICALLY PERFECT...
CIRCUMFERENCE MEASURED
TO THE NTH DEGREE... GIVING
OFF AN INFINITE RANGE OF
RADIO SIGNALS, OF INFINITE
INTENSITY, IN A PERFECTLY
UNIFORM FASHION!
MASS... INFINITE!!
RATE... PERFECTLY UNIFORM..
IF MEASURABLE AT ALL!!
NO FLAW...NO DEVIATION!

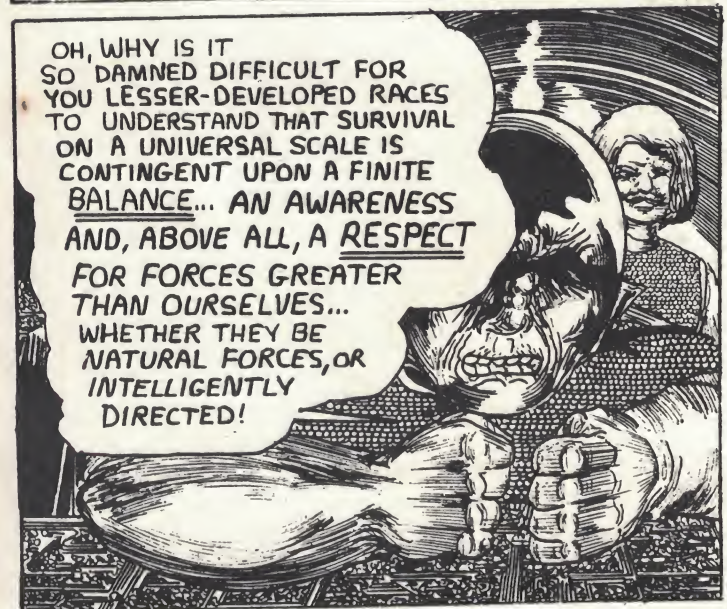
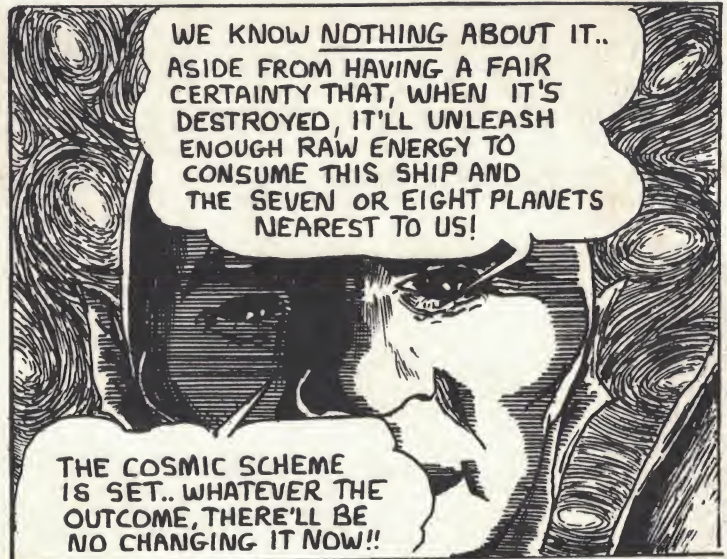
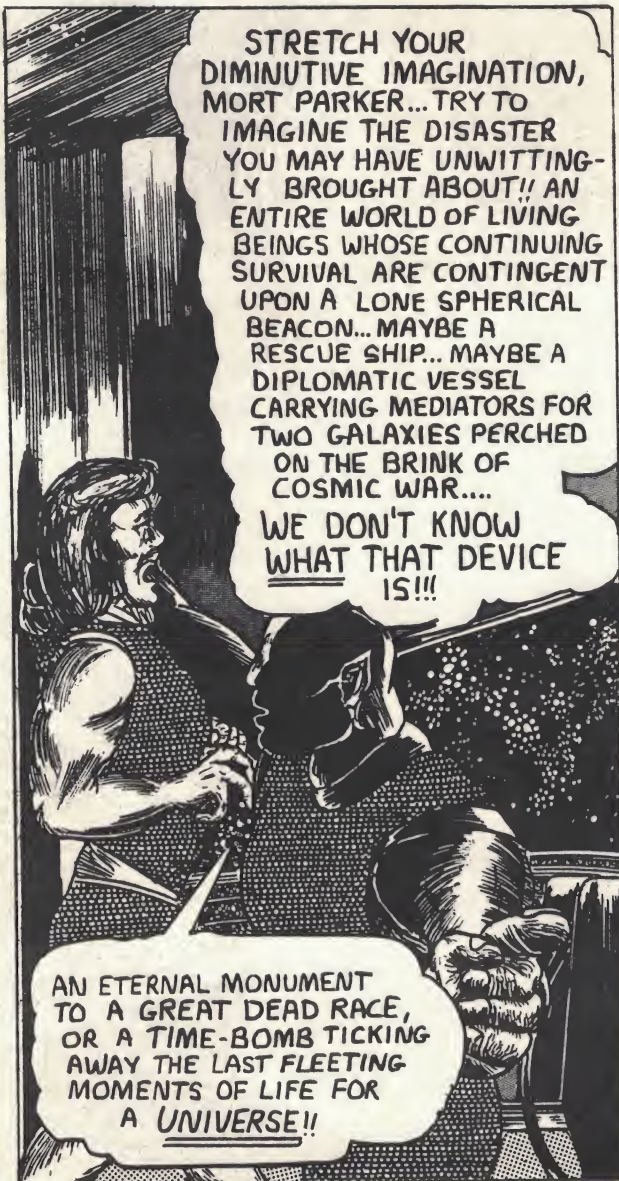
...A
THING OF
ABSOLUTE
PERFECTION!





WHAT MANNER
OF BEING ARE YOU?!!?
HAVE YOU NO RESPECT
FOR LIFE-FORMS OTHER
THAN YOUR OWN?!!





I--I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
THE PROJECTILE WE FIRED
IS PASSING THROUGH THAT
SPHERE...

... IT'S AS IF IT WERE AN
ACTUAL PHYSICAL EXTENSION
OF THE TIME-SPACE
CONTINUUM!!

WELL, LOVELY...
BUT HOW ARE
HUMAN
PASSENGERS
AFFECTED???

WE'LL KNOW
IN A MOMENT!!

I KNEW I
SHOULDN'T HAVE
ASKED!!

AMAZING!!
WE PASSED THROUGH
IT WITH NO
PHYSIOLOGICAL
DAMAGE OR
SIDE-EFFECT!
...AND WITHOUT
LOSING A MOMENT
OF PRECIOUS
TIME!!

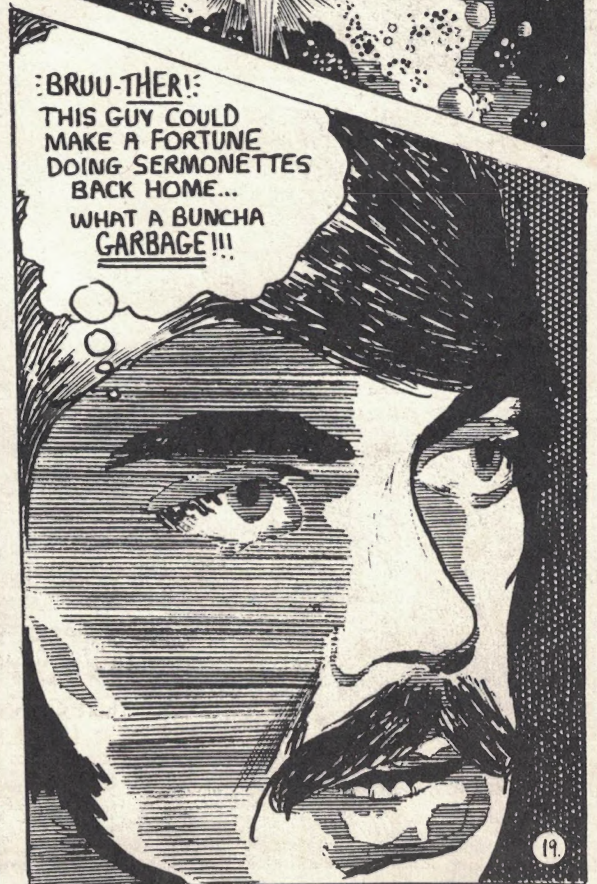
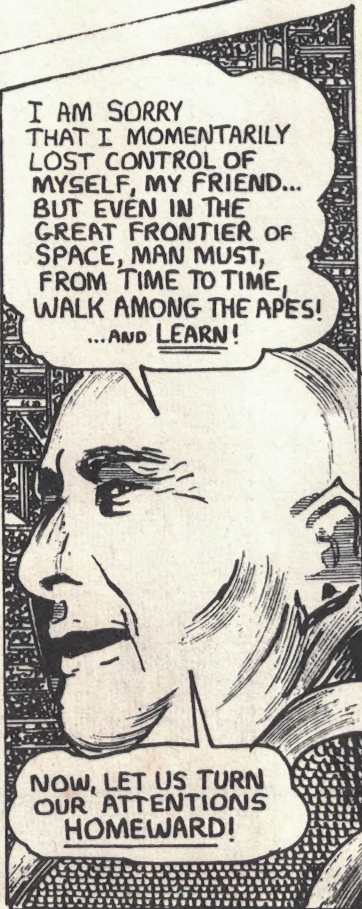
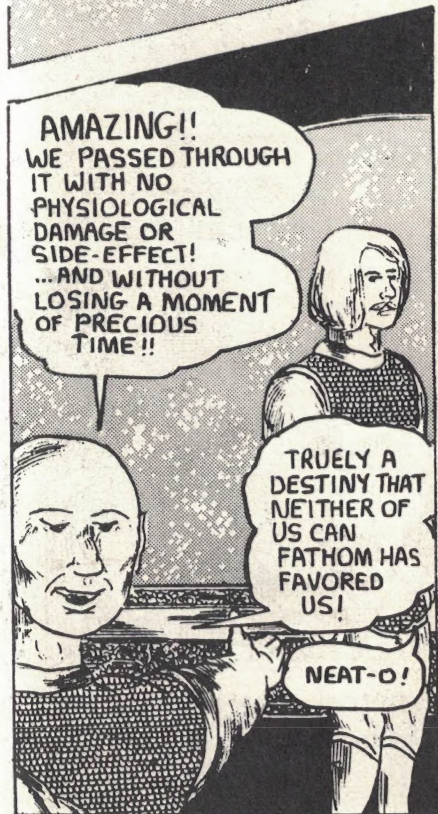
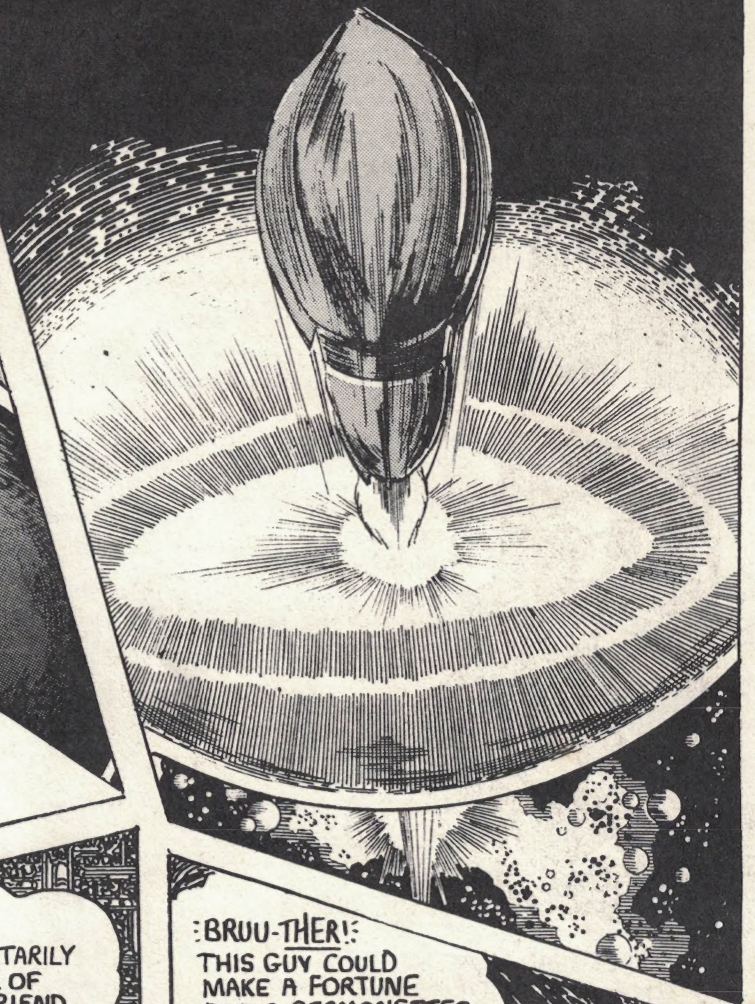
TRULY A
DESTINY THAT
NEITHER OF
US CAN
FATHOM HAS
FAVORED
US!

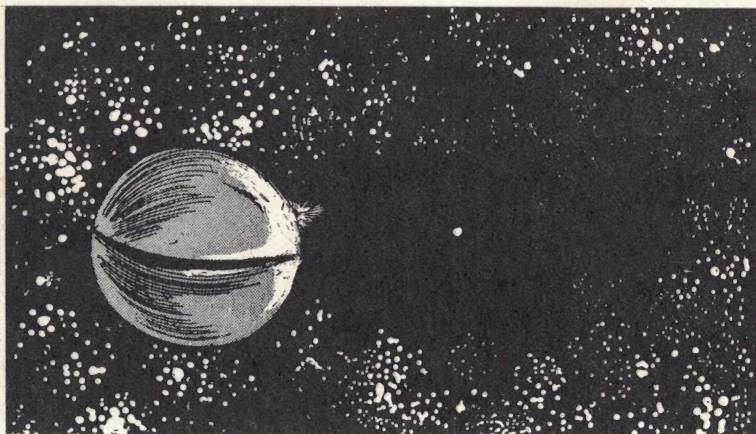
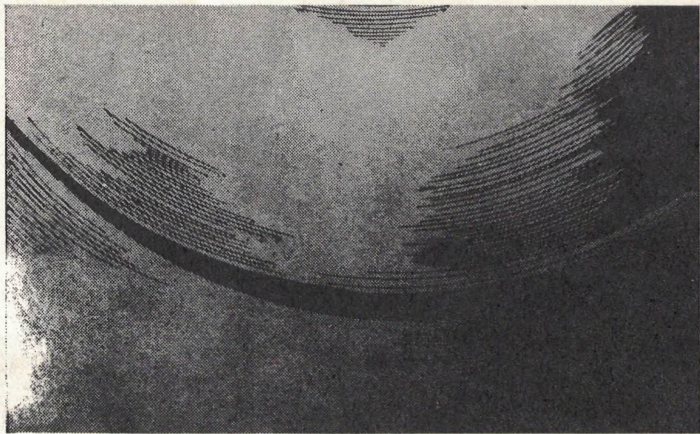
NEAT-O!

I AM SORRY
THAT I MOMENTARILY
LOST CONTROL OF
MYSELF, MY FRIEND...
BUT EVEN IN THE
GREAT FRONTIER OF
SPACE, MAN MUST,
FROM TIME TO TIME,
WALK AMONG THE APES!
...AND LEARN!

NOW, LET US TURN
OUR ATTENTIONS
HOMeward!

BRUU-THER!
THIS GUY COULD
MAKE A FORTUNE
DOING SERMONETTES
BACK HOME...
WHAT A BUNCHA
GARBAGE!!!





NEXT: "PROS"

SPECIAL FEATURE
(Continued from Centerfold)

governmental bureau known only as the "Personnel Dept." 12. Melvin Barns, everybody's favorite paranoic who provided a terrifying view of small-town espionage in "The Bartelso Directory". 13-14. The passengers of a run-away space shuttlecraft called "Excaliber," Mort Walker and the Corbein, blazing a path through allegoric literature in a space-age parody of the "Lady of Shalott". Finally, 15 another space wayfarer, the Perfidious Phiddeas Phoom, created by Butch Bertram. The Phoom is a lone survivor of a long-dead race of beings who speak in rhyme and have the ability to give substance to men's innermost dreams and desires. The Phoom is scheduled for an early guest appearance in "Excaliber".

FINAL NOTE: A newly revised version of "The Antiman" has gone well past initial planning stages and is scheduled for release roughly around the latter part of October. The new book, based on the original 1972 version, is scripted and drawn by Paul Cordel, who wrote and embellished the original version.



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regular academic day
and during scheduled
theatre performances.



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Staff
of
"EXCALIBUR"
takes great
pride in
announcing
the professional
debut of
CHARLES PITTS, JR.
in his artistic
rendering of
Shibbo

in a forthcoming
issue of Jan Strand's
ANOMALY.

